

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Thomas-Colas, Faithe A., 1961- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, |
| Dates: | February 20, 2017 and November 19, 2008 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2008 and 2017 |
| Physical Description: | 7 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:12:02). |
| Abstract: | Publisher Faithe A. Thomas-Colas (1961 -) was the publisher of the Milwaukee Courier, a radio show panelist and television co-host, and the community affairs director of The Salvation Army of Greater Milwaukee. Colas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 20, 2017 and November 19, 2008, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2008_136 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Publisher Faithe A. Thomas-Colas was born on June 22, 1961, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Helen McCray and Floyd Thomas. Colas graduated from John Marshall High School in 1979.

Thomas-Colas began her career at *The Milwaukee Courier* in the 1980s as a sales executive and later served as advertising manager, associate publisher, and editor. In 2004, Thomas-Colas was named publisher of *The Milwaukee Courier*. She has been a WMCS radio show panelist and has co-hosted *What's Going On?* on MATA community television. Thomas-Colas was selected as the new co-host for Milwaukee Public Television's *Black Nouveau*. Thomas-Colas became the community affairs director of the Salvation Army, Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Division, in November of 2007.

Thomas-Colas has been the recipient of several community awards including the U.S. Postal Service's Women Putting Their Stamp on Metro Milwaukee 2002. In 2003, she received the Images of Us Sports Award recognizing women in journalism and the Andrew S. Douglas 2003-2004 Community Service Award. Thomas-Colas serves on the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund Corporate Advisory Board, and she is co-chair of the NAACP Environmental Justice Task Force. She is a member of the NAACP Executive Committee, a vice president of the Wisconsin Black Media Association, and active in several other community and professional organizations. Thomas-Colas is the president and a founding member of Dark Pearl Rising, an African American arts alliance comprised of Ko-Thi Dance Company, African American Children's Theatre, Hansberry Sands Theatre Company, City Ballet Theatre, Art In Motion, Milwaukee Dance Connection and My Window Productions. Colas is a member of The Publishers Group, which has created the internet site Bronzeville-Milwaukee.com to promote greater understanding of the history of Milwaukee's Bronzeville. She is also the co-producer for a documentary on Milwaukee's black factory workers, *Punching In: A Tribute to the African American Factory Worker in Milwaukee*.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 20, 2017 and November 19, 2008, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Publisher Faithe A. Thomas-Colas (1961 -) was the publisher of the Milwaukee Courier, a radio show panelist and television co-host, and the community affairs director of The Salvation Army of Greater Milwaukee.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Thomas-Colas, Faithe A., 1961-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Thomas-Colas, Faithe A., 1961- --Interviews

Publishers and publishing--Interviews

Newspaper employees--Wisconsin--Milwaukee--Interviews

African Americans in the newspaper industry--Wisconsin--Milwaukee--Interviews

African American women executives--Wisconsin--Milwaukee--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Publisher

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, February 20, 2017 and November 19, 2008. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas was born on June 22, 1961 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Helen McCray and Floyd Thomas. Her great-great-great-grandfather, Edwin Thomas Erby, was one of sixteen children born to an enslaved woman and a slaveholder called Captain Erby, whose name he eventually renounced. Many years later, her paternal grandparents, Lucille Thomas and Marigold Perry, raised her father on a farm in Batesville, Mississippi. Thomas-Colas' maternal grandmother, Lucille Berrien, was African American; and married Thomas-Colas' maternal grandfather, who was German and Cherokee, in Opa-locka, Florida. She moved to Milwaukee after his death in the Korean War. Thomas-Colas' parents both migrated to Milwaukee as teenagers, and met at the Lighthouse Gospel Chapel. They married after Thomas-Colas' birth in 1961, when her mother was seventeen years old. Her mother became one of the first black models to work for the Rosemary Bischoff Studios and Models Agency, while her father founded the Thomas Doors carpentry company.

Discrimination in employment

Single mothers

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_001_002, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas grew up on the North Side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When she entered school, she was incorrectly diagnosed with a learning disability, but her mother, Helen McCray, intervened to ensure that she was placed in the appropriate courses. During the third grade, Thomas-Colas transferred from the public schools to the St. Leo Catholic School, where she and her siblings were the only black students. After school, they were left in the care of a nanny from Germany while their mother worked. During this time, Thomas-Colas' maternal grandmother, Lucille Berrien, was active with civil rights organizations like the NAACP, as well as radical groups such as the Commandos and the Black Panther Party. In 1972, her maternal grandmother became the first African American woman to campaign for the mayoralty of Milwaukee. In addition, Thomas-Colas remembers the riots in Milwaukee following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Busing for school integration.

African American grandmothers.

Black power--United States.

Race riots--Wisconsin--Milwaukee.

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_001_003, TRT: 0:28:43 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas aspired to become a lawyer at an early age, and was influenced by Vel Phillips, who was an African American female judge in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Thomas-Colas began the sixth grade at Milwaukee's Pilgrim Lutheran School, where she was confirmed in the Lutheran faith. Around this time, her maternal grandmother, Lucille Berrien, served as a bodyguard for activist Angela Davis. In 1976, Thomas-Colas returned to the public schools, and enrolled at Milwaukee's John Marshall High School. There, she initially struggled to fit into the new social environment, but soon joined the

track team and cheerleading squad. She also enjoyed history, and read newspapers like the Milwaukee Courier. In 1979, Thomas-Colas matriculated at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. There, she met and married Christophe Colas, with whom she had her first child, Paige Colas, in 1984. During her studies, Thomas-Colas also worked to help support her family, who were financially strained by her parents' divorce.

Black power--United States.

African American grandmothers.

Recessions--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_001_004, TRT: 0:29:36 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee from 1979, and occasionally took leave to help support her family. In 1982, her parents divorced, and Thomas-Colas married Christophe Colas. She gave birth to Paige Colas in 1984, and filed for divorce shortly afterwards. Thomas-Colas eventually left school to become a public relations consultant; and, through a client, met Jerrel Jones, the owner of the WNOV Radio station. Thomas-Colas worked at the radio station for six months, and then joined the staff of the Milwaukee Courier, which Jones also owned. She started as an advertising sales agent, and was eventually promoted to become the newspaper's publisher. Thomas-Colas talks about news events that occurred during her tenure at the Milwaukee Courier, including the police killing of Ernest Lacy and the serial murders committed by Jeffrey Dahmer. She also talks about the Milwaukee Courier's financing, which came primarily from majority corporations.

Dahmer, Jeffrey

Mass media--social aspects--United States.

Discrimination in law enforcement--United States.

Community development--Wisconsin--Milwaukee.

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_002_005, TRT: 5:17:34 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas joined the staff of the Milwaukee Courier in 1987, and served as its publisher from 2004 to 2007. During this time, she was responsible for the newspaper's daily operations, and often encountered obstacles to generating revenue. At this point in the interview, Thomas-Colas describes the history of the Milwaukee Courier, which was founded in 1964 by Mary Ellen Shadd Strong and her son, Jerrel Jones, as part of the Courier Communications Corporation. In addition to her involvement in print media, Thomas-Colas worked in Milwaukee's broadcast industry. She appeared on Martha Love's 'What's Going On?' as well as her husband, Eric Von's radio show, and co-hosted Milwaukee Public Television's 'Black Nouveau,' which featured guests like screen actor Anthony Anderson. Thomas-Colas also talks about Marvin Pratt, the first African American mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and the tense relationship between President Donald Trump and the news media.

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_002_006, TRT: 6:28:54 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas became the community affairs director of The Salvation Army of Greater Milwaukee in 2007. She talks about the history and mission of The Salvation Army, which was founded in the 19th century as a Christian social service organization. The organization operated several programs that served the African American community in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, including Coats for Kids and Feed the Kids, which offered meals

during the summer. The organization also maintained an emergency homeless shelter. In addition, Thomas-Colas talks about The Salvation Army's international presence in South America, Africa and the Caribbean; and its advisory board, which became more diverse during Thomas-Colas' tenure. Thomas-Colas met her second husband, Milwaukee radio host Eric Von, at an NAACP convention in 2005, and they married in 2010. Her husband created the black men's health website Brain, Brawn and Body, which Thomas-Colas maintained after he passed away in 2016.

Video Oral History Interview with Faithe A. Thomas-Colas, Section A2008_136_002_007, TRT: 7:28:16 ?

Faithe A. Thomas-Colas was promoted in 2014 to the role of assistant director of development for The Salvation Army of Greater Milwaukee. In memory of her late husband, Eric Von, she endowed the Eric Von Broadcast Fellowship at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and maintained the men's health and wellness website Brain, Brawn and Body. She talks about her concerns for the African American community, and remembers the administration of President Barack Obama. Thomas-Colas also reflects upon her life and legacy, and how she would like to be remembered.